

Submission to the native vegetation review

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Overall I see the proposed changes to be positive and address some very important issues. The change to invasive native scrub control is a very good one. As such I am pleased with the changes but there are some areas where it does not go far enough or has missed important issues.

Overall intent of the Regulations

It is my view that the review has so far not addressed the issue of finding a balance between environmental and production values. It does not seem to value the contribution strong production makes to the ability of landholders to address environmental issues on their land. Or the great work that most landholders are doing already without government help or interference. I think that it is wrong to simply assume that all clearing is bad, and that landholders have to be watched constantly to stop them doing the wrong thing. Most of us work hard to protect the environment we live in.

On our property we have 16000 hectares locked up in private conservation reserve which is more than a third of our land and yet we have been investigated twice for small 5 and 8 hectare breaches to clearing laws. One was a fire break and the other was our error. The point being that these officers had no idea of the large reserve we manage and maintain due to clearing and conservation not being looked at together.

The solution to this problem is to ensure that all information is looked at rather than just clearing in isolation. If officers are to be sent out they should be fully briefed on the total operations of the property in question not just one part of its actions.

Paddock trees

Isolated paddock trees in the western division should be looked at differently to the rest of the state. The western division is less than 10 developed so individual trees in cropping paddocks should have less environmental value than heavily developed areas of the state. There are several compelling reasons for isolated paddock trees to be removed.

- With the use of GPS for controlled traffic and conservation farming practices these trees become a significant OH&S issue as collisions are more and more likely.
- Overuse of chemicals is also an important issue as this increases when steering around isolated trees.

The solution to this problem is to create a specific western division code of practice RAMA for the removal of isolated paddock trees.

Small clumps and uneven edges

As with paddock trees small patches of native veg and crooked edges to patches also create issues with the use of GPS tracking. These types of clearing need some control as the biodiversity value can be much higher than isolated trees. None the less the same over spraying and OH&S problems arrive when steering around them.

The solution is a streamlined PVP code of practice with minimal offsets.

Gravel pits

Being a sparsely populated part of the state most of our roads are dirt and with the increase in production from cropping and stock production they are receiving more traffic from larger trucks (b-doubles and road trains). Our shire has had trouble getting gravel pits approved due to the veg laws and even the use of old gravel pits has been stopped. The maintenance of our roads is critical for getting produce to market and simply having access to our properties has at times been very difficult. Even the CMA has been limited in its travel due to roads being closed with as little as 10mm of rain. All produce from this part of the western division is moved out on trucks, and markets won't wait for roads to reopen. There is also the fact that as our roads get worse the truck owners are less likely to work in the area and if they do it is at an inflated price.

The solution to this issue is that materiel such as gravel is allowed without PVP type tradeoffs and instead a code of practice be used, that has a revegetation at the end of the sites usage. To me this is a case of vegetation loosing little as these sites are small and the community benefiting as a whole. In addition a Rama should be developed to allow landholder to use gravel for their internal roads that is sourced from the same farm.

Native Veg Act

These and the other changes that have been put forward will help but the real issue is the ACT itself and the idea that one set of rules can cover the whole of NSW. The basis in which it was developed (all clearing must **improve or maintain environmental outcomes**) is clearly wrong as it totally ignores production and community outcomes. The amount of paper work and red tape is also stopping many landholders from applying for Veg act related issues.

Gary Doyle